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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Mr. John Logan, Acting Chief
Cable Services Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
2033 M Street, N.W. Rm 918
Washington, D.C. 20036

Re: 1998 Biennial Review of FCC Regulations

Dear Mr. Logan:

On January 30, 1998, the Cable Services Bureau held a public forum to receive ideas regarding Commission regulations administered by the Cable Services Bureau that are "potential candidates for repeal or modification." See Public Notice DA 98-31 (rel. Jan. 9, 1998). The forum was convened as part of the first biennial review of Commission regulations pursuant to Section 11 of the Communications Act. Subsequently, on February 5, 1998, the Commission released a list of thirty-one (31) proposed proceedings to be initiated as part of the 1998 biennial review of regulations, including three (3) proposals concerning Cable Services Bureau regulations. General Action, Report No. GN 98-1 (rel. Feb. 5, 1998). Ameritech New Media, Inc. ("Ameritech"), appreciates the opportunity to provide the following comments to the Bureau as it undertakes its review of regulations.

Ameritech concurs with the goals and objectives of the 1998 biennial regulatory review which is intended to eliminate or modify regulations that are "overly burdensome or no longer serve the public interest." Id. In particular, we are pleased to see that the Cable Services Bureau is proposing to streamline and consolidate "public file" requirements applicable to cable television systems under Part 76 of the Commission's rules. Ameritech has reviewed Part 76 of the rules and offers its suggestions below for eliminating certain reporting requirements, consolidating public files and the rules that pertain to them, and simplifying public access to data by making records available to the public over the Internet.

As a general matter, Ameritech requests that the Commission consider consolidating all of its rules pertaining to public file requirements in one section of Part 76 of the rules. At present, there are many, separate rule sections within Part 76 pertaining to various, different public file requirements. For example, Section 76.305 contains general rules concerning records to be maintained by cable systems, while Section 76.302 provides for separate public file requirements related to a cable operator's must-carry obligations and Section 76.601 sets forth additional public inspection requirements for records documenting system performance tests. It is confusing

Mr. John Logan, Acting Chief
Cable Services Bureau
March 27, 1998
Page Two

and burdensome for operators to refer to multiple (and sometimes overlapping) rules in order to ascertain what information must be maintained in its public inspection file. Accordingly, Ameritech suggests that all requirements pertaining to public inspection files be consolidated under one rule.

In addition, Ameritech questions the continuing need to maintain multiple "hard copy" public inspection files throughout the three state region in which it operates its cable system. At present, Ameritech maintains seven (7) separate public inspection file locations in its service territories: three (3) in Detroit, Michigan; one (1) each in Columbus and Cleveland, Ohio; and three (3) in Chicago, Illinois, including the file maintained at its corporate headquarters. To date, to Ameritech's knowledge no one has ever requested to view any of the documents available at these various public file inspection locations. Nonetheless, Ameritech goes to considerable length (and expense) to create, duplicate and update the hard copy records which it is required to maintain in these various public files.

Ameritech suggests that, for many cable systems, a more cost-effective means of making information available to the public would be to place records available for public inspection on the Internet at a company's website. This would ensure that records are readily available to the public, even from remote locations. Moreover, we do not mean to foreclose the public from visiting cable operations in their local community to review these files. To this end, the Commission could require a cable operator that chooses not to maintain paper copies of its public inspection file to make available at its public inspection file site a computer terminal ← capable of accessing the operator's website. Under this proposal, therefore, consumers still could visit any of Ameritech's seven (7) public inspection sites and request to view, or obtain a printout of, a particular record.

Ameritech submits, as an attachment to this letter, a list of public file requirements that it believes could easily be made available in electronic format on an Internet website. See Exhibit 1. These requirements pertain to Equal Employment Opportunity records, children's programming, and must-carry reporting obligations impacting both broadcasters (such as changes in principal headend) and the viewing public (e.g. lists of available signals and channel line-up).

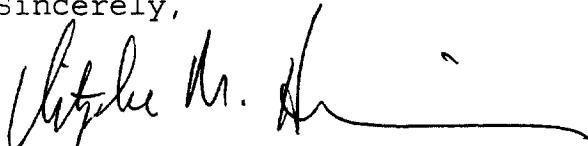
Mr. John Logan, Acting Chief
Cable Services Bureau
March 27, 1998
Page Three

Finally, Ameritech proposes that the Commission consider eliminating certain public file requirements governing the technical operation of cable systems. These requirements are contained in Sections 76.601(c) and (e) of the rules. See Exhibit 1. Section 76.601 (c) pertains to proof of performance test data which the cable operator must compile twice a year and make available for inspection by the Commission, or the local franchise. Section 76.601(e) requires the cable operator to compile signal leakage logs for five (5) years, which, under Section 76.614, the operator must make available to the FCC upon request. In both cases, the operator is also required to have these records available in its public inspection files pursuant to Section 76.305(a). Ameritech has never had a request to view these reports. Given the technical nature of these reports, the lack of demonstrated public interest in the "raw data" they contain, and the sheer volume of paper required to duplicate them in multiple public files, Ameritech submits that the public file requirement should be eliminated. A certification statement by the technical engineer in charge should suffice to attest to the system's compliance with FCC technical rules and the underlying data would continue to be available to the Commission or local franchise upon request.

Ameritech recommends that the Cable Services Bureau move expeditiously to initiate a notice of proposed rulemaking on the modification of Part 76 of the Commission's rules and, thereby, begin to make the deregulatory framework contemplated by the Act a reality. Ameritech looks forward to participating in the announced proceedings and working with members of the Commission to complete the biennial review process.

If you wish to discuss these questions further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Christopher M. Heimann
Counsel for Ameritech New Media

cc: David Solomon

Exhibit 1

Electronic Format/Internet Website Public File Documents

1. EEO Records §76.305(a); §76.79(a); §76.79(b)
2. Commercial records for children's programming §76.305(a); §76.226(c)
3. Channels delivered to subscribers §76.601(b)
4. Designation and location of principal headend §76.302(b)
5. List of signals carried in fulfillment of must-carry obligations §76.56(e); §76.302(a)

Elimination of Public File Requirements - Provide to FCC Upon Request

1. Proof of performance records §76.305(a); §76.601(c)
2. Signal leakage logs and repair records §76.305(a); §76.604(e); §76.614